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“Old cruise” – New growing segment of Croatian nautical offer

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ABSTRACT

While in the world cruising considers the emergence, especially for Croatian coast, ports and ships, it can be concluded that it is still a specific form of tourism. In Croatia, in the last few years a segment of small cruisers has been developed. A “mini” does not have the same meaning as in the world of cruising. This name in the world means a time-limited travel to large ships while in Croatia, size, date available ships, as well as their capacity for receiving passengers imposed by this title just because it does not have the mega-cruisers. The development of old timers cruise prompted the little family business along the Adriatic coast. Small family cruiser companies also develop a fleet of fast boats of medium capacity to transport tourists along the coast and on the islands. The competitiveness of domestic cruise products in the international environment has not been the subject of research; therefore there is no publicly available knowledge. The contribution of this work is reflected in the fact that with the offer of mini cruise trips analysis and a survey conducted on tourists satisfaction with the offer in this segment, conclusions have been adopted on the current offer of travel and classification of vessels used for this new segment of the cruise lines offer in Croatia has been made.

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1 Introduction

Cruising represents such a manifestation of nautical tourism that is organized as a round trip with vessels of cruise companies or for this purpose purchased and specially prepared vessels [6]. Operations of cruise take place through the business of cruise vessels, cruise ships and through the operation of specialized ports for cruise tourism. Products cruise are more complex and complicated than other forms of nautical tourism and are offered as products of cruise ship offer or products of a route.

2 “Old cruiser” as an element of Croatian mini cruise operations

Tourist phenomenon of cruise with passenger ships has already been transformed into a serious socio-economic activity. The tourist market of demand directly and indirectly encourages the development of many industries and businesses, with a source of additional income for the

local population, increasing employment opportunities. All this causes a general increase in standards, reduces emigration, revitalization of the various activities specific to a particular place, and encourages the growth of utilities, the balance of payments of the country, the social product and national income [10].

Although cruising is considered to be global phenomenon, particularity of Croatian coast, ports and ships, leads to conclusion that is a specific form of tourism related to a specific area and region. In recent years it is being developed as segment of small cruisers.

The term “small”, does not have the same meaning as in the world of cruising. This name indicates time limited travel on ships of limited accommodation capacity. In Croatia, the size of previously available ships and their passenger capacity imposed this title, as there are no mega cruise ships available [4].

For the development of the domestic cruise with traditional old timers it is important to have ports of old small towns that is the Croatian coast rich with and are suitable for the reception of Croatian old timer cruisers.



Figure 1 Structure of total revenue from passenger cruise ship

Source: [3]

In addition to this, the big importance is also in anchor in smaller and larger organized and non-organized bays, as well as moorings in all ports. In this way development of the Croatian or small cruise is essential for the development of anchorages and moorings as special ports of nautical tourism.

Cruise ships, as objects of cruise in Croatia, are limited to Croatian old timers and other new vessels of smaller capacity. Croatian old timers are organized into two associations – the northern and central Adriatic and the southern Adriatic, and are developing one-day excursion cruise and multi-day cruise. In addition to these two forms other are also being developed such as stay at specially equipped and built ships in which the tourists are provided with food and drinks with the possibility of a shorter sea journey. This form of cruise is most developed in Dubrovnik on ships type karaka and gallean, and in other cities on other types of old timer ships.

The competitiveness of domestic cruise products in the international environment has not been the subject of research therefore there is no publicly available findings. However, a good indicator of international competitiveness of the Croatian domestic cruise is a ranking list of most desirable travel by magazine Traveler (National Geographic Society) that has ranked this type of product among 50 most desirable travels in the world [2].

Operations of Croatian cruise through the cruise lines old timers, traditional trabakulas and similar, statistically are not recorded, so it is not possible to show the success of such a Croatian nautical offer. There are no official data on available capacity of ships, physical traffic measured by number of arrivals and overnight stays as neither the data on financial transactions realized by providing cruise services. Domestic cruise services are provided by economic operators registered for sea and coastal water transport –

passenger transportation with passenger ships and yachts with professional crew on several days (round) trips [4].

The only existing numeric record of Croatian cruising is a list of shipping companies and vessels published in 2007 by the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, and beside the list of mini cruisers, it also contains excursion boats and yachts with professional crew [1]. The list was created for the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure, for the subsidy of fuel for shippers, through surveying various shipper associations. Development lasted long and necessitated the involvement of a large number of people. After 2007 a number of new mini cruise ship with a steel hull appeared, and the separation of “crewed yacht charter” as a special nautical products also begun. Correct list of shippers and cruise ships in Croatia is currently impossible to get, but it is possible to make a statistically sample on which the conclusions are made about the approximate situation on the field [8].

3 Vessels of cruise ship travel

Vessels of a cruise ship travel are not competition to nautical tourism but actually complement the nautical tourism offer, and are also represent tradition of this area. According to data from the register of ships that is made by the port authority, in Croatia there are about 250 vessels registered that are intended for the purpose of tourism day trips or multi-day cruises. It is estimated that the total fleet has over 2,000 beds and can transport over 5,000 excursionists at one time.

In order to encourage the development of excursions and cruises, from 2007 Republic of Croatia implements the Programme for granting state aid for the difference in price of fuel to the shippers on national voyages, for which 6 million kunas have already been spent. Also, since 2005 the program of support for the construction and reconstruction of the hull of the ship has been implemented, which through the three-year period covered 37 vessels and 7 million kunas have been spent. These grants are intended to improve the safety of navigation, the development of small businesses on the coast and islands and also for tourism development [12].

Today's cruise ships were formerly designed with completely different purposes, but their shape and design proved to be interesting for vacation and sightseeing of the Croatian coast [11]. Gradually they have been renovated and adapted to the new needs in order to finally and completely meet the standards of cruise tourism. At the same time, market of demand for cruising has imposed the need to build contemporary and modern cruise vessels. Cruising vessels complement the nautical tourist offer and also represent traditional activity of this area. Today, transport is offered with ships classified in different categories shown below.

Deluxe ships. Characteristics of the most luxurious (deluxe) vessels are, above all, the production in the last three years, the average length of 45 m, a width of 8 m with a spacious deck area up to 300 m², which allows a comfortable

Table 1 Cruise realization time period

1 st week		A	C	E	F	D	A
2 nd week		B	D	F	F	C	A
3 rd week	A	B	D	F	F	B	A
4 th week	A	C	E	F	E	B	
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October

F: Main season lasts 6 weeks

E: Season lasts 3 weeks

D: Pre-season lasts 3 weeks

C: Post-season 1 lasts 3 weeks

B: Post-season 2 lasts 4 weeks

A: Out of season lasts 5 weeks

Source: Processing of the author according to: <http://www.katarina-line.com> (21.11.2016)

Table 2 Ship cabins categorization

B category bellow the deck	B category on the deck	A category bellow the deck	A category on the deck	A+ category bellow the deck	A+ category on the deck
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Source: processing of the author according to: <http://www.katarina-line.com> (21.11.2016)

stay for travelers. Comfortable VIP cabins with lounges and bars provide the atmosphere of the most luxurious hotels on the mainland. Occupant safety is contributed by a large number of qualified crew, whose members are not rarely also the owners of the ship that is rented to an agency.

Selling of the arrangements and organization of the trip as well as offer of additional content is performed by travel agency. During the stay on the boat, tourists are offered with authentic dishes that shows the atmosphere of visited destinations. In addition to entertainment on board, the agency cares for optional excursions so that guests get to know the historical and cultural sites of visited destination. A large number of content and visited ports in the period of realization of arrangements are enabled by the speed of the vessels, their modern equipment and machinery. Although this is a large ship, cabin number does not exceed 20 in order to maintain the atmosphere of intimacy on the trip, which means no more than 40 passengers with a crew of up to 7 members.

A+ category ships. Also interesting, and not less comfortable class of ships is the A+ category. The ships of this group, on average, are 10 meters shorter, built in early 2000, slightly slower and with a smaller deck surface. A+ category has greater number of available boats for cruising on the market, so is the price of the arrangement on these ships more accessible, but this does not mean that the offer of additional content is more modest.

A category boats. Lower in the classification and in characteristics of the ship makes the A category. The characteristics of these ships are: year of production dates back to the middle of the twentieth century, usually made of timber, the design includes sails. These boats have been adapted, but with the intention to retain the original appearance of ships. A smaller number of cabins and limited deck space provides a sense of family travel.

B category ships. The simplest boats are classified in category B and are designed for adventurous travelers and younger population [7] that are ready to share small cabin space and sanitary facilities during the trip. The ages of these of ships exceeds 100 years and are commonly used for arrangements that emphasize a tour of towns and cities rich with nightlife content. It is a kind of “floating hostels”, which the youth is more prone to, and demand for them is increasing.

Over the years, cruise tourism has more demanding travelers and consequently expands its offer and facilities. From the initial idea of sailing and getting to know the coast, the content has been developed to various options tailored to different tastes, needs and age of passengers.

4 Seasonality and the price of cruise trips

According to the Regulations on the periods of high season, pre-season, low season and out- of season in tourist municipalities and cities, it is indicated that the period of visits of foreign tourists is in the period from May to September. Agencies that offer cruising along the Croatian coast, thanks to the mild Mediterranean climate, offer trips from mid-April until mid-October. Below a display of time period in which cruises are realized is shown.

Prices depend on the period in which trip is realized, therefore the largest financial allocations are needed for travel in high season period (F) and Seasons (E).

In addition to term of travel, price is also conditioned by selection of cabins where tourists will spend time while cruising (Table 2). Depending on the ship and its categorization, basic offer is based on the initial selection of cabins above or on the deck. Further selection is in accordance with the ship, which means that the cabin can be A+, A or B category.

Table 3 Programs and prices of mini cruises of selected travel agency in 2016

Cruise program	Time of departure	Cruise price (in EUROS)
South and middle Adriatic (Opatija-Krk-Rab-Zadar-Molat-Lošinj-Cres-Opatija)	Every Saturday from 19.04. till 18.10.	380
South Adriatic (Split-Makarska-Mljet- Dubrovnik-Trstenik-Korčula-Hvar-Split)	Every Saturday from 19.04. till 18.10.	425
Croatian "wilderness" (Spli-Omiš-Korčula-Lastovo (Green cave)-Komiža/Biševo (Blue cave- Stari Grad-Bol-Split)	From 24.05. till 09.08.	465
"Nature and culture" (Split-Rogoznica- Krka waterfalls-Kornati-Zadar-Vodice-Trogir-Split)	Od 14.06. till 16.08.	560
"Discovering Dubrovnik" (Dubrovnik-Mljet-Korčula-Hvar-Trestenik-Šipan-Dubrovnik)	Every Sunday from 20.04. till 19.10.	380
"Biser sjevera", jedan smjer · Opatija-Split · Split-Opatija	28.06. and 11.10. 30.08.	425 670
"Pearl of North", one way · Split-Dubrovnik · Dubrovnik-Split	From 26.04. till 04.10. From 03.05 till 11.10.	590 590
"Exploring the Adriatic", one way · Dubrovnik-Opatija · Opatija-Dubrovnik	26.04. 12.07.	635 895
Cycling program · Opatija (Opatija, Krk, Rab, Pag, Molat, Lošinj, Cres, Opatija) · Split, southern part (Brač, Hvar, Korčula, Mljet, Pelješac, Makarska, Omiš) · Split, northern part (Rogoznica, Betina, Brbinj, Sali, Tribunj, Skradin, Vodice, Primošten)	From 19.04. till 11.10. from 19.04. till 11.10. 10.05. and 27.09.	425 425 480
Simpler program – "Cycling and walking" (Opatija, Krk, Rab, Mandre, Mali Lošinj, Cres, Opatija)	From 03.05. till 27.09.	425
Program "Sunčanje i biciklizam" (Opatija, Krk, Rab, Pag, Molat, Mali Lošinj, Cres, Opatija)	from 28.06. till 23.08.	670
Program "Walking and hiking" · Opatija-Rab-Mali Lošinj-Martinšćica-Cres-Opatija · Split-Stari Grad-Hvar-Pelješac-Mljet-Korčula- Vela Luka-Bol-Split	26.04. 17.05. and 20.09.	425 415
"Slim, fit & vital" program (Opatija-Rab-Lošinj-Cres-Opatija)	25.06.-28.06. and 30.08.-03.09.	265
Nudist programs FKK · Route 1 · Route 3	14.06. and 09.08 07.06. and 23.08.	560 465
Gay cruise · Route 2 · Route 5	09.08. 20.07.	850 800
Program "Youth and entertainment" Mini one way cruise · Dubrovnik-Trstenik-Korčula-Hvar-Split · Zadar-Molat-Lošinj-Cres-Opatija · Opatija-Krk-Rab-Zadar (2 nights) · Split-Makarska-Mljet-Dubrovnik (2 nights)	from 10.05. till 27.09. from 21.04. till 20.10. from 21.04. till 20.10. from 19.04. till 18.10. from 19.04. till 18.10.	415 304 304 220 220
Deluxe (Split-Korčula-Mljet-Dubrovnik-Trstenik-Hvar-Bol-Split)	From 10.05. till 18.10.	995

Source: Processing of the author according to: <http://www.katarina-line.com> (21.11.2016)

Passengers that are not attached to the place of departure or are ready to organize the return on their own, will choose one of the offered “one way” trips. Looking at the distance of start and end points of travel, the longest trip is cruising in one direction from Opatija to Split and its inverse option. Tourists visit three out of five tourist regions of the Adriatic. The offer is available once or twice a season. The same as it with cruise trips, in “one way” trips it is possible, with surcharge, to visit cities and a three-day stay in them before boarding the cruiser and beginning of the trip.

Package includes half-board service. Additional fees for port taxes are mandatory on each trip. Depending on the port of call and the town which is visited, there are optional excursions offered whose price depends on offered service. Each route has the ability, with additional cost, for professional guidance when visiting major cities.

Characteristic for the Croatian and foreign mini cruising is that journeys begin and end in the different ports. Unlike the big cruise ships (sail the Mediterranean or other destinations), that regularly fill their bearing capacity; domestic cruisers have limited capacity and cannot allow to spend part of the cruise with empty capacities. Therefore in Croatia mini cruising trips are organized in special arrangements, intended for tourists with a predetermined number of days spent on board.

5 Examination of passenger satisfaction on offer and content on a deluxe ship

To study the satisfaction of passengers on a mini cruise travel “KL 1- The northern and middle Adriatic “ a survey has been conducted on a return from a 8 day trip to initial port of Opatija. Taking into account that the capacity of the selected ship was 28 passengers, not including the crew, 17 correctly filled questionnaires makes the rate of return of 60 %, which is a representative sample.

In June 2016, a survey was conducted during the arrival at the port of discharge (with the help of crew members) among the passengers of mini cruise “Petrina” that visited 7 different coastal towns on a cruise from Opatija. It is important to emphasize that the demographic and ethnic composition of the passengers are completely different, but this does not mean that comparisons are not valid. The survey has been conducted in English, Italian and German in order to be accessible to a wide range of passengers. Each of the following statements respondents rated with a grade from 1 to 5 where 5 represents the claim “totally agree” while grade 1 indicates the claim “strongly disagree”. By analyzing the research results it was found that the most prevalent were married couples, while the average age of passengers was from 35 to 51 years. According to respondents’ answers, it can be concluded that this category of ship attracts families with children, not just the elderly. The most prevalent guests are those with Croatian citizenship, and it is also significant that among the passengers there are those who return to cruise several times.

Table 4 Statistical summary of survey conducted among passengers of “Petrina” mini cruiser

	Middle grade
Satisfaction with welcoming	4.6
Satisfaction with the service on board	4.9
Satisfaction with the facilities on board	4.7
Itinerary satisfaction	5
Satisfaction with culinary offer on board	4.8
Satisfaction with excursions offer in destinations	4.4
The journey has fulfilled expectations	5
I will recommend this trip	5

Source: Author processing according to questionnaires

According to the analysis of questionnaires, it is possible to conclude that the passengers are satisfied with journey and will recommend it to friends and acquaintances what is important for the promotion of the mini cruise. The greatest satisfaction was expressed by the very itinerary that included visit to Krk, Rab, Zadar, Molat, Lošinj and Cres from initial and final port of destination – Opatija. Staff friendliness and full service on board has been assessed with a high mark that attests to the fact that the mini cruise offer is competitive and satisfying. Guests are particularly satisfied with culinary offer on board, which includes menus with specially prepared authentic dishes according to the destination in which they are located. As each offered tour includes trips to the mainland, on this trip highly was rated professional guidance during the tour-visited destinations. Slightly lower ratings stand out when it comes to equipment of the ship. The guests expressed their dissatisfaction with the accommodation units and toilets that can be attributed to the time when the ship has been built and it can be concluded that there is a need for additional investment in infrastructure.

6 Conclusion

Today’s cruise ships were formerly designed with completely different purposes, but their shape and design proved to be interesting for vacation and sightseeing of the Croatian coast. Gradually they have been renovated and adapted to the new needs in order to finally and completely meet the standards of cruise tourism. At the same time, market of demand for cruising has imposed the need to build contemporary and modern cruise vessels.

Raising the competitiveness of the Croatian tourist destinations implies a step forward in quality of supply of all types of accommodation including the establishment of a recognizable Croatian fleet of “floating hotels” through the construction of 100 small boats designed for cruising in the Croatian territorial waters. This represents potentially one of the most attractive Croatian tourist brands. New fleet of “floating small hotel” means building functionally equipped ships, suitable for receiving a small number of passengers and appropriate for sailing all year round. In order to en-

sure sustainable and internationally competitive development, and energy-efficient operations, the construction of "floating small hotel" in Croatia involves deployment of environmentally responsible practices at all levels, both during construction and throughout the operating business.

Total expected investment activity in tourism in Croatia by 2020 is estimated at about 7.0 billion euros, and is based, inter alia, to invest in small floating hotels which is estimated at 110 million euros, where 100 million goes on construction of 100 new ships, and the remaining 10 million euros on improving the quality of existing offer (50 ships).

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